

"I Am for Man" (Notes on Birthday Observance)

HENRY GEORGE was born September 2, 1839 in Philadelphia. Today an extension of the school which bears his name is situated in Philadelphia, and is attracting wide attention. As is the annual custom, Philadelphia's director, Joseph Stockman, and other leaders in the school, went to Arden, Delaware on August 29, to join in festivities honoring the birthday. A group of 16 S.A.G.E. members from New York thoroughly enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere of beautiful Arden's outdoor theater. Speakers were Don Stephens and "Buzz" Ware of Arden; and Miss V. G. Peterson, Robert Major and Robert Clancy of New York.

Henry George went west, while still a young man—but the west of those days was a rugged place indeed. He lived in San Francisco and enjoyed considerable prominence as a journalist and lecturer. The unforgettable contribution made in San Francisco was however, the book *Progress and Poverty* which was completed in 1879 and which, after many vicissitudes, was published, widely read and discussed, translated into several languages and finally adopted as the textbook for the Fundamental Economics courses taught in Henry George Schools. In a recent article in *The Saturday Review Progress and Poverty* was listed with twelve other books purported to have "changed America."

In 1950 the Mayor of San Francisco first proclaimed September 2 "Henry George Day" in that city, and this year again the day was celebrated with a meeting in the Palace Hotel. San Francisco's somewhat new but vital school is under the directorship of Robert Tideman. Its board of trustees contains impressive names, including that of Joseph S. Thompson, who is president of the Bay Area School. He spoke on "The Prophet of San Francisco" to a gathering of some fifty friends.

In Los Angeles a birthday meeting was held at the Women's University Club with an unusual attendance. Captain Jesse B. Gay acted as chairman of the program.

Leslie Clappool, political editor of the Los Angeles Daily News, though admittedly not a follower of Henry George, did a great deal of research in preparation for an address on "Henry George's Place as a Prophet of a Better Society." He gave an inspiring talk, praising George and urging others to go out and work as he did. This was favorably noted in the press.

J. Rupert Mason of San Francisco added late news of interest on world developments as well as notes on legislation affecting the irrigation districts. He presented a historical outline of Henry George's influence in California.

In San Diego the birthday was celebrated with a Pot Luck Picnic in Balboa Park and *no speeches*. Froman Barrett, president of the alumni association, and James L. Palmer, an energetic and devoted teacher, planned a celebration which delighted all.

Henry George died in New York 56 years ago. This is the first year however that official recognition has been given to him on the East Coast. A proclamation was issued by the Mayor setting aside September 2 as "Henry George Day." The Museum of the City of New York forthwith planned a unique display in honor of the day, and a short program was held in the museum on what proved to be one of the hottest days of the year. Reports are, however, that the museum was comfortably cool and this

first formal celebration in New York was a big success.

Following the museum program many friends went to Central Park to gather round the sturdy white oak tree, the sapling dedicated a few years ago in the rain by a spartan group which included Anna de Mille, Lawson Purdy, Francis Neilson and other notables. Miss V. G. Peterson, Secretary of the Schalkenbach Foundation, spoke fittingly. It was she who selected the tree which is growing so proudly and significantly in Henry George's name. Dinner was served at New York headquarters for many happy friends.

Robert Clancy, New York's director, opened the short program at the Museum, before an audience of one hundred and introduced its director, John Walden Myer. Mr. Myer said that Henry George, who lived the last 17 years of his life in New York, had left "his mark on the city as one of our leading philosophers, reformers and economists." He said though he shuddered at the use of the word "reformer," it was, in the case of Henry George, a benign and much-needed reform.

Benn Hall, a graduate of the school who has become its publicity consultant, recalled to the audience that nearly 70,000 people have completed the course of study based on Henry George's works, and that in 1952 alone there were 2300 graduates throughout the country. About 500 volunteer instructors give their time and energies to teaching in the various extensions. Mr. Hall feels firmly convinced that we are now experiencing a noteworthy "rediscovery" of Henry George.

Agnes de Mille, a theatrical celebrity as well as a brilliant author, expressed herself as being moved and touched by the museum's exhibit of her grandfather's books, photographs and effects. She could think of only one thing which might have been added, and that was the bed in which Henry George was born, a very handsome one.

Miss de Mille spoke of the "house on 17th Street" and she evidently remembers it well—it was "not splendid" but "in that house was thunder." There were four children, two Irish maids and often five or ten more at the dinner table than had been expected. Young men came from all over the world to call on Henry George and, said Miss de Mille, "he changed their lives."

Probably the part of the display which held the attention of most observers, was the dress suit worn by Henry George in his last campaign. "I was cleaning out a lot of old trunks in the basement," Miss de Mille said, "and I found it a very touching object. I held it up to me and noticed that I came shoulder to shoulder with it and I remembered my mother saying he was a small man, red-haired and fiery—every atom of his body challenging and fighting. Somehow you can see that small suit contained dynamite."

Henry George was defeated in the mayoralty campaign in which he wore the suit, but listening to Miss de Mille one knew that didn't matter. What he was defeated for, was more important. The quality of the mind of the man is illustrated by the spontaneous answer given to a platform chairman who introduced George as "the friend of the working-man." He responded promptly, "I am for *man*."